United Nations E/2018/34 (Part II)–E/ICEF/2018/7 (Part II)

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
17 July 2018

Original: English

Report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund on the work of its annual session of 2018

(11–14 June 2018)*

* The present document is an advance version of the report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund on its annual session (11–14 June 2018). The report on the first regular session (6–7 February 2018) was issued as E/2018/34 (Part I), and the report on the second regular session (12–14 September 2018) will be combined with E/2018/34 (Parts I and II) and issued in final form as *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council 2018, Supplement No. 14* (E/2018/34/Rev.1–E/ICEF/2018/7/Rev.1).

18-11928 (E) 310718

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I. Organization of the session

A. Opening statements by the President of the Executive Board and the Executive Director of UNICEF

1. In his opening statement, the President highlighted that the annual session 2018 was especially pertinent because the Executive Board would focus on progress that UNICEF had made over the previous year in achieving its goals and facing challenges that had impeded its progress. The Board's ultimate aim was to foster the ability of UNICEF to promote and protect the rights of children around the world, including in humanitarian emergencies, and especially children furthest behind.

2. He pointed out that the annual session was also significant in that it marked the end of the Strategic Plan, 2014–2017 and the beginning of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021. The annual report for 2017 of the Executive Director of UNICEF (E/ICEF/2018/9 and Add.1) took on additional importance as the final assessment of achievements and challenges. The Board would give the same attention to the final annual report on the implementation of the Gender Action Plan, 2014–2017 (E/ICEF/2018/12).

3. At the session, the Board would receive an update on strengthening protections against sexual exploitation and abuse and against workplace sexual harassment. The President welcomed the concrete actions UNICEF was taking to improve its effectiveness and transparency in that area. Its success depended on the trust of its thousands of staff around the world, many of whom worked in dangerous conditions. The organization's acknowledgement of its shortcomings on sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment was a positive first step.

4. The President commended UNICEF for its achievements in humanitarian action and welcomed its first annual report on humanitarian action (E/ICEF/2018/10). The scale, length and number of humanitarian crises had increased along with UNICEF humanitarian expenditure so that the Board had requested a full report in 2018. He drew attention to the organization's crisis interventions, and called on UNICEF to continue to strengthen the humanitarian-to-development continuum, including through close collaboration with other United Nations system organizations.

5. He underscored that education best embodied the critical continuum between development and humanitarian work. The quality and consistency of education in crisis settings was crucial to preparing children for life after conflict. He stated that in 2017, UNICEF had reached nearly nine million children in humanitarian situations with formal or non-formal education.

6. The President welcomed the revision of the evaluation policy of UNICEF (E/ICEF/2018/14), and underlined that its strategies for increasing the quantity, value and usefulness of evaluations would guide the work of the organization going forward. He looked forward to discussing ways to modernize the Executive Board, building on the 2016 quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (General Assembly resolution 71/243) and resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system. He gave high priority to the 2017 paper of the Presidents of the Executive Boards on joint matters and had put forth a draft decision laying out changes to the UNICEF Executive Board.

7. In her address, the Executive Director began by thanking the outgoing Secretary of the Board, Mr. Nicolas Pron, for his leadership, consensus building and diplomacy throughout his tenure, and welcomed the incoming Secretary of the Board, Ms. Hai

Kyung Jun, who brought extensive experience in donor relations, resource mobilization, policy design and intergovernmental affairs.

8. The Executive Director presented her vision to accelerate progress for children and young people, grounded in the targets established in the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 and in the United Nations reform agenda. UNICEF would accelerate how it drove results by scaling up its work in four priority areas.

9. The first was to intensify UNICEF work to integrate development approaches into its humanitarian responses, as part of the humanitarian-to-development continuum. The emergency response must not only save and improve lives in the short-term, but must also to help fragile communities and countries to recover, rebuild and avoid backsliding in the future, thereby planting the seeds of development.

10. The second was to expand the UNICEF focus on local solutions at scale. Experience had shown that community health systems with community workers were the most effective means of delivering primary care to underserved populations. UNICEF would work closely with Governments to design and deliver those services through their formal health systems, which would be critical to reaching universal health coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals vision of health for all.

11. The third was to build partnerships around the United Nations Young People's Agenda. As it strengthened support for children across the first decade of life and consolidated the gains made as they grew, UNICEF would focus equally on the second decade of life. In September 2018, UNICEF would bring together partners from every sector and across the United Nations system to design, scale up and deliver the education, training and support that young people needed to shape a better future for themselves and their societies. The Young People's Agenda would help UNICEF to deliver on its commitments to young people set out in the Strategic Plan.

12. The fourth was to pursue and apply innovations in every aspect of UNICEF work, and include technologies that delivered services in hard-to-reach communities. That included products and programming that supported children's growth, development, education and protection. Those services needed to be supported by equally innovative approaches for public and private financing and service delivery.

13. She stressed that central to the four priorities was the organization's determination to expand partnerships with Governments, foundations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector. It included strengthening collaboration with other United Nations development organizations to accelerate progress towards the Goals and delivering more efficiently and effectively, as part of operationalizing the common chapter of the strategic plans of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). As businesses continued to transcend their traditional role, UNICEF looked to work with them to find new, effective ways of reaching children and young people still left behind.

14. The Executive Director underscored the role of UNICEF staff. The organization was committed to making zero tolerance a reality for harassment and abuse of authority and sexual exploitation and abuse, both for staff and for the children and young people. UNICEF had strengthened and simplified its reporting mechanisms and investigation processes, and was committed to better screening for new hires. In 2018, it had created an independent task force to review its practices and provide recommendations to prevent and address gender discrimination, harassment and abuse of power. UNICEF had obtained EDGE Certification (Economic Dividends for Gender Equality Certification), the leading global assessment and business certification standard for gender equality.

15. UNICEF was equally committed to a culture of accountability, excellence and learning, and supported staff members in their training needs. To introduce new perspectives, it had launched a senior fellows programme to bring talented individuals from the public and private sectors to work in UNICEF programmes around the world.

B. Adoption of the provisional agenda, timetable and organization of work

16. The Executive Board adopted the provisional annotated agenda, timetable and organization of work for the session (E/ICEF/2018/8/Rev.1).

17. In accordance with rule 50.2 of the rules of procedure, the Secretary of the Executive Board announced that credentials had been submitted by 37 observer delegations, including four international organizations, nine NGOs and 20 UNICEF National Committees.

18. In national statements, Board members recognized the dedication and leadership of the Executive Director in continuing her predecessor's work and in driving forward the organization's mandate. They commended the UNICEF staff for their tireless efforts, often in difficult settings, to leave no child behind.

19. They commended UNICEF for its progress towards ending child marriage, advancing girls' secondary education, promoting gender-responsive adolescent health and addressing gender-based violence in emergencies. They welcomed its collaboration with UNFPA to provide preventive and protection services to girls and women at risk of or affected by female genital mutilation/cutting. They looked forward to the operationalization of gender equality as a cross-cutting priority in the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 and the implementation of the Gender Action Plan 2018–2021.

20. Delegations welcomed that the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 was built upon the successes of the previous plan and was aligned with the United Nations reform. Noting the importance of predictable, long-term, flexible funding for UNICEF to fulfil its mandate, several delegations pledged multi-year contributions to core resources and encouraged others in a position to do so to do the same. They urged Member States to contribute to the voluntary trust fund for the resident coordinator and to accept the 1 per cent coordination fee on earmarked funding.

21. Delegations were pleased that the humanitarian-development nexus was a top priority in the new plan. UNICEF had a critical role to play in assisting children and refugees in humanitarian settings; its dual mandate made it central to ensuring that United Nations organizations worked together to plant the seeds of development in humanitarian planning and implementation. They appreciated the progress on education indicators and that millions of children were able to access formal and non-formal education in crisis situations. UNICEF had significantly contributed to humanitarian aid reform to balance humanitarian and development work, the two pillars of fundamental human rights stipulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. They welcomed the priority on building resilience to sustain and scale up hard-won gains, and encouraged UNICEF to fulfil its commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit. They expressed appreciation for the role of UNICEF in monitoring and reporting on children in armed conflict.

22. Many delegations expressed strong support for safeguarding the rights of the child as crucial for sustainable development, and expected UNICEF to show unwavering support to the fulfilment of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. That included strengthening its normative work; a rights-based approach; and increased attention to gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and

reproductive rights, children with disabilities, minority children and violence against children in all forms. They appreciated the organization's achievements in advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, as outlined in the annual report on the Gender Action Plan, 2014–2017. They looked forward to working with UNICEF in applying its human rights-based approach to development, including through the Group of Friends of Children and the Sustainable Development Goals, and urged UNICEF to continue to mainstream gender in all programming.

23. A number of delegations welcomed the Young People's Agenda and its focus on and investment in opportunities for adolescents, especially through education, training and support and the use of relevant new technologies. Delegations encouraged collaboration on the Agenda with other United Nations entities.

24. Delegations also welcomed the strong focus on innovation in the new Strategic Plan and the commitment to scale up new technologies. They also welcomed the organization's active participation in the United Nations Innovation Network, and stressed the importance of United Nations system organizations working closely in a coherent way to capitalize on innovations.

25. Groups of delegations highlighted their special needs and underscored the importance of a universal UNICEF presence, including through multi-country offices, to address national goals and priorities relating to children in middle-income countries, landlocked countries, least developed countries, small island developing States, including in the Pacific, and countries in conflict. They called on UNICEF to continue to work with those countries and promote innovative means of participation that took into account national challenges.

26. The representative of SOS Children's Villages International stressed that institutional care was harmful to children. Some Member States, working on alternative care through partnerships with UNICEF and NGOs, were seeking to progressively phase out institutions. The representative called on UNICEF to continue its commitments to children and young people in the alternative care system and welcomed the inclusion in the Strategic Plan of an indicator calling for national adaptation of the 2009 guidelines for the alternative care of children.

27. The representative of the NGO Committee on UNICEF welcomed the focus on promoting the rights of children who were furthest behind. The complexity of the humanitarian and development situations required a strong coordinated response to protect child rights. It was crucial to ensure that child rights received the attention, funding, focus and political commitment they deserved. Looking forward to the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, the committee was committed to providing feedback and contributing to its implementation.

II. Deliberations of the Executive Board

A. Annual report for 2017 of the Executive Director of UNICEF

UNICEF report on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit

28. The President introduced the annual report for 2017 of the Executive Director (E/ICEF/2018/9), accompanied by the addendum on the implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system and the Integrated Results and Resources Framework of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014–2017 (E/ICEF/2018/9/Add.1); the UNICEF implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational

activities for development of the United Nations system, 2017 (UNICEF/2018/EB/7); and the UNICEF report on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit (E/ICEF/2018/11).

29. After introductory remarks on the annual report by the Deputy Executive Director (Partnerships), the Director of the Division of Data, Research and Policy presented details on results achieved in 2017.

30. Board members welcomed the annual report and UNICEF progress against the outcome areas of the Strategic Plan, 2014–2017, and commended the leadership of the Executive Director and the work of UNICEF staff globally, often in challenging environments. They drew attention to its achievements in child protection and rights, such as the decline in child marriage and improved access to health care, basic sanitation and education, especially in humanitarian settings, as well in providing learning and working opportunities for youth and ensuring their participation in politics and society.

31. Delegations underscored the importance of viable, long-term solutions that were focused on building national and local capacities and systems to address the needs of local populations. Noticing that UNICEF had not consistently met its output targets for capacity development, they urged it to step up efforts to support countries in devising the right policies for children and youth, and to advocate for such policies.

32. A number of delegations expressed the strong support for the United Nations reform agenda as embodied in resolution 72/279 and resolution 71/243 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system. The achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development demanded a system-wide focus on promoting the rights of children worldwide, ensuring that their needs were met and empowering them to harness their full potential. They expected the United Nations development organizations to proactively engage with and provide strong support to the Secretary-General in fully implementing reforms. They welcomed the important role of UNICEF in the United Nations development system, and expected it to play a key role in implementing reforms that brought greater coherence to the Organization's response to development challenges at the country level.

33. Several delegations urged UNICEF to proactively implement resolution 72/279 at all levels. It should focus its activities on its comparative advantages, including the coordination of relevant joint initiatives with other United Nations organizations and partners, to deliver on the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) under the leadership of the resident coordinator. They stressed their commitment to transforming the United Nations development system so that it could deliver the most effective, integrated development assistance at the country level to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

34. A group of delegations encouraged UNICEF to continue to focus on leaving no one behind, mainstreaming gender equality and creating coherence between humanitarian and development interventions. UNICEF should work with the other United Nations development organizations to: (a) globally align the implementation of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 with resolution 72/279; (b) make available in full its contributions to the expanded cost-sharing mechanism to fund the reinvigorated resident coordinator system; (c) constructively work with the other United Nations organizations on a system-wide strategic document that clearly stipulated their comparative and collaborative advantages and specify how the system as a whole was more than its parts; (d) review at the country level the implications of the new setup for the organization and report to the Board on how it would impact the UNICEF business model and its delivery; and (e) move towards common premises and common business operations as quickly as possible.

35. Delegations were pleased with the efficiency gains in 2017 and encouraged UNICEF to continue to increase its organizational efficiency and the quantity and quality of evaluations. They stressed the importance of assessing and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of oversight, including steps to make Board discussions more substantive, interactive and efficient. They encouraged reporting geared towards facilitating dialogue and ensuring Board guidance and oversight. It was crucial for Member States to be able to demonstrate the impact of UNICEF. Reporting should include discussions on challenges for and within UNICEF, lessons learned and proposals for the way forward.

36. Delegations underscored the importance of predictable, flexible, multi-year funding in order for UNICEF to fulfil its mandate, implement the Goals and leave no child behind. They acknowledged UNICEF efforts to explore financing partnerships, in particular with the private sector, and the work of the National Committees in mobilizing public and private funds. Other delegations highlighted the potential of the UNICEF Innovation Fund to advance the implementation of the Goals through innovative technology and financing.

37. Underlining the importance of lessons learned, delegations stressed that the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 had to be implemented holistically through the strengthening of multi-, cross-sectoral approaches and engagement with the private sector in achieving the Goals for children; the realization of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus to prevent future humanitarian crises; and a deepening collaboration with the other United Nations development organizations through, for example, the common chapter of the strategic plans. They welcomed the inclusion in the UNICEF Strategic Plan of the aim to protect the rights of children with disabilities.

38. The Chairperson of the Standing Group of National Committees for UNICEF drew attention to the importance of private sector partnerships and contributions to core resources. Private sector partnerships could help to accelerate positive results for children through coordination, scaling up best practices, sharpening strategies and using the comparative advantages of UNICEF to build a stronger organization. In 2017, the National Committees were responsible for approximately 84 per cent of UNICEF private sector resources, and were the largest source of flexible funding.

39. The representative of ChildFund Alliance underscored the importance of resources in ensuring that policies and interventions for child protection were implemented. The global costs and economic impact of violence against children were estimated to be as high as $7 trillion, while the reported average investment to tackle the issue was less than $0.65 per child. The alliance welcomed the increase in the UNICEF child protection-related expenditures, and called for its continuation. Child-focused partnerships and collaborative initiatives were also critical for strengthening cooperation.

40. The representative of World Vision highlighted its work with UNICEF in humanitarian settings on health, nutrition, sanitation, hygiene, HIV/AIDS, child protection and ending violence against children, and its collaboration with the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children. The representative stressed that ending violence against children demanded collective action and mobilization

41. The Executive Board adopted decision 2018/7 (see annex).

B. Update on strengthening protections (a) against sexual exploitation and abuse and (b) against workplace sexual harassment

42. The President introduced the update.

43. After introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director (Management), the Director of the Programme Division provided an update on strengthening protections against sexual exploitation and abuse, followed by the Director of Human Resources, who presented an update on strengthening protections against workplace sexual harassment.

44. Board members stressed their staunch commitment to addressing sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment in all its forms in UNICEF and throughout the United Nations system. They welcomed the efforts of the Secretary-General to combat such violations and of the United Nations system to implement a zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and sexual abuse and workplace sexual harassment.

45. A group of delegations condemned sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, and welcomed the steps that UNICEF and other United Nations organizations had taken, including the zero-tolerance policy, while calling on the organizations to do more. Sexual exploitation and abuse undermined the ability of international development actors to work effectively. Organizations that did not protect their own staff from sexual harassment and abuse of power could not protect their beneficiaries, and put at risk the delivery of the 2030 Agenda. They welcomed the cooperation of UNICEF with the Victims Advocate for the United Nations by undertaking an independent review of its policies and processes, appointing a senior-level champion, developing community-based reporting mechanisms, strengthening human resources procedures and increasing resources for investigations.

46. The same group called on UNICEF and the other organizations to implement institutional and cultural change through a system-wide, coherent United Nations approach, and expected them to: (a) address the underlying culture driving unacceptable behaviours, promote gender equality and increase the number of women employed throughout the United Nations system; (b) set up proper, impartial, harmonized mechanisms and procedures to allow for complaints, reporting, investigation and accountability; (c) encourage reporting to uncover cases and protect whistle-blowers; (d) remove barriers to people coming out and provide victims and survivors with support and protection; (e) pursue a comprehensive approach; (f) ensure a coherent system-wide approach in which affiliated organizations, suppliers and implementers abided by the same principles, and perpetrators could not circulate from job to job; and (g) guarantee open, transparent communication with beneficiaries, staff, partners and Member States.

47. Echoing the Secretary-General's report on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (A/72/751 and Corr.1), they required that, effective January 2018, the senior United Nations leadership system-wide submit annual certifications to their governing bodies confirming that they had fully and accurately reported and taken appropriate actions on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. The group requested that each organization present its certification to its Executive Board at their annual sessions, covering all aspects of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment and complementing existing reporting though the Ethic Office, the Office of Audit and Investigations and Evaluation Office.

48. A delegation suggested that, to avoid duplication, the organizations report to their Executive Boards on sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment at the joint meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF and UN-Women. The same delegation underscored the importance of adhering to the established terminology of General Assembly resolutions for these issues.

49. The Executive Board adopted decision 2018/8 (see annex).

C. Annual report on UNICEF humanitarian action

50. The President introduced the annual report on UNICEF humanitarian action (E/ICEF/2018/10).

51. After introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director (Programme), the Director of the Office of Emergency Programmes provided a summary of the annual report, including a video on the response of UNICEF and partners to the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

52. Board members stressed that UNICEF was a critical partner in humanitarian action and a key player in the humanitarian system. The report was an important step in facilitating strategic discussion between Board members and the UNICEF leadership on humanitarian action.

53. A group of delegations, noting that in 2017, 55 per cent of the organization's country-level expenses were directed towards supporting emergency response, underscored the vital importance of accountability and transparency of expenditure. They commended UNICEF for its analytical overview of results, challenges and lessons and its vision for future programming decisions. They appreciated its plans to address challenges in a systematic, structured way, and commended its focus on reaching the most vulnerable. They sought details on the ways in which UNICEF targeted vulnerable groups in humanitarian action and encouraged it to continue to protect the rights of vulnerable children, including adolescents and children with disabilities. Beyond oversight, the group sought continuous dialogue on humanitarian action, including between Board sessions. They encouraged UNICEF to reflect upon ways to improve the reporting of its experience in humanitarian situations, including more explicitly addressing the specific reporting year in question and specifying next steps for the year to come. Future annual reports should also include clearer references to lessons learned from the synthesis of UNICEF evaluations of humanitarian action 2010–2016.

54. The same group sought deeper engagement on the organization's role in system-wide initiatives and the broader humanitarian system, including the World Humanitarian Summit and Grand Bargain commitments. They requested details on actions to: (a) meet commitments to global humanitarian reform; (b) become effective, efficient and fit-for-purpose in humanitarian action, including through better cooperation and coordination with other humanitarian donors; (c) help build the capacity of local actors; and (d) demonstrate leadership. They stressed that, as a dual-mandate agency, UNICEF had to be a front runner in showcasing efforts to operationalize the nexus between humanitarian action and development programming to reduce vulnerability, build resilience and promote rapid recovery and transition. That included strengthening coherence, promoting joint planning and programming, promoting respect for humanitarian principles and working on collective outcomes across the United Nations system.

55. Delegations sought details on (a) the plans to develop an institutional access framework; (b) the exchange of best practices with other humanitarian actors; (c) the ways in which the new human resource strategy would affect crisis contexts; and (d) opportunities to engage in joint initiatives, such as joint audits and the harmonization of due diligence mechanisms. There was a request for more forward-looking analyses of the role of UNICEF in humanitarian action, including how it would build upon its comparative advantages, the current challenges, its coordination and partnerships with other actors and the lessons learned in recent years, and the ways in which those analyses would inform future planning decisions. They also sought details on the tangible results from efforts in joint needs assessments and the reduction of duplication and management costs.

56. Other delegations requested information on the organization's growing emergency appeals; the operationalization of gender-responsive approaches; partnerships and coordination on gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse in humanitarian settings; the use of cash transfers; the status of the Core Commitments to Children in Humanitarian Action; the fit-for-purpose status of the organization's financial architecture regarding response to emergencies; and the impact of United Nations reform on UNICEF humanitarian work.

57. The Executive Board adopted decision 2018/9 (see annex).

D. Annual report on the implementation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2014–2017

58. The President introduced the annual report on the implementation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2014–2017 (E/ICEF/2018/12).

59. After introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director (Programmes), the Principal Adviser, Gender and Development, provided an update on UNICEF progress against the plan.

60. A group of delegations welcomed the balanced reporting on results and challenges and the achievements in advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, especially in the four targeted priority areas. They noted the valuable contribution of UNICEF to ending such harmful practices as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting, and to reducing adolescent pregnancy, anaemia and gender-based violence, specifically in school settings and humanitarian situations.

61. The group commended UNICEF for strengthening its institutional capacity and mainstreaming gender equality, including by increasing the number of gender specialists, identifying gender focal points, training staff and implementing assistance and tools, such as GenderPro, the gender focal point capacity programme. They encouraged UNICEF to continue to accelerate progress in gender mainstreaming under the Gender Action Plan, 2018–2021, including making progress towards achieving the commitments under the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women to allocate 15 per cent of total resources towards gender equality.

62. The group encouraged UNICEF to refine its understanding of gender mainstreaming and invited it to elaborate on how gender mainstreaming worked corporately and throughout programming, including, for example, the different implications for girls and boys of actions planned in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2017/9. The information provided should include details on the ways in which improvements in gender-based analysis, capacity building, resourcing and results tracking had empowered and shaped country programmes for transformative impact. They invited UNICEF to provide details on how it intended to work with women and girls with disabilities across its gender priority areas.

63. Overall, the group encouraged more analytical, strategic reporting that provided compelling evidence of results and demonstrated, through well-defined indicators, the ways in which UNICEF was closing gender gaps, including around discriminatory norms and practices. They recommended the establishment of targets for performance benchmarks to track progress, and pointed to the need for stronger data in humanitarian contexts.

64. The group noted that despite being at the end of the cycle, the report focused on output, including service delivery, awareness raising and capacity building, rather

than outcome results. There was little evidence of transformational change, practices, policies or efficiencies arising out of UNICEF programming. UNICEF should continue to improve its application of results-based management to ensure an appropriate level of reporting, building on lessons learned from previous years, and taking the opportunity to showcase its unique and collaborative achievements in partnership with key stakeholders.

65. Other delegations sought details on barriers to meeting targets and steps to alleviate them; difficulties ensuring gender expertise at the country level; economic dividends for gender equality certification; plans to address the lack of financing options; national capacities to deal with issues surrounding adolescent girls; building a stronger gender-sensitive information management system; the degree to which gender inclusiveness included gender identity and diversity; the work of the Gender Action Plan Steering Committee to provide oversight; improving national sex and age disaggregated data; interagency collaboration on gender equality; the role of women's rights organizations in efforts to advance gender equality; and the impact of resolution 72/279 on interagency coordination on gender.

E. UNICEF programme cooperation

(a) Country programme documents

66. The President informed the Executive Board that, in accordance with decision 2014/1, country programme documents would be considered and approved at the current session on a no-objection basis. Drafts of the country programme documents for Kenya, Malawi and Rwanda had been posted on the Executive Board website, along with the respective costed evaluation plans, from 16 March to 5 April 2018 in order to give Board members an opportunity to comment. The comments received had been shared with the respective country and regional offices and Governments and taken into account, as appropriate, in the final versions of the documents. Further discussion was to be held only if at least five members of the Board had informed the secretariat in writing that they wished to bring a country programme before the Board for further discussion. The secretariat had received no such requests.

Eastern and Southern Africa

67. The Regional Director presented the country programmes for Kenya (E/ICEF/2018/P/L.4), Malawi (E/ICEF/2018/P/L.5) and Rwanda (E/ICEF/2018/P/L.6). The programme in Kenya was aimed at reducing stunting and mortality; improving early learning and education; enhancing child and adolescent protection and the primary prevention of HIV; and improving social protection, inclusion and community resilience. In Malawi, the programme was aimed at improving early childhood development, care and learning; ensuring that school-aged girls and boys achieved essential learning outcomes and skills for life, were safe from exploitation, harmful practices and violence and benefitted from integrated social services; and ensuring that girls and boys grew up in resilient, inclusive and child-friendly communities. In Rwanda, the programme was aimed at reducing child mortality and improving child health by strengthening health systems; improving quality education and inclusive learning opportunities; enhancing child protection, especially by reducing violence and improving the family reintegration of children in institutions, including those with disabilities; and expanding the access of disadvantaged families to integrated, well-resourced social protection interventions.

68. The representative of Kenya recognized the partnerships and collaboration with UNICEF and their positive impact on children in Kenya. UNICEF was uniquely positioned to support the country programme priority areas, particularly on food

security, nutrition and universal health coverage. Kenya appreciated the continued UNICEF support in strengthening national monitoring systems, including for major surveys, such as the 2019 census, which incorporated child-related and gender-disaggregated indicators. Kenya looked forward to continued collaboration to ensure that gains for children were safeguarded, and called on UNICEF to ensure that the risks identified in the country programme were mitigated, including through increased donor support.

69. The representative of Malawi underscored that the partnership with UNICEF would change the trajectory of the country's future. UNICEF would work with the Government to invest in improving early childhood development, care and learning so that that school-aged girls and boys achieved essential learning outcomes and skills and grew up in resilient, inclusive and child-friendly communities. Malawi hoped that extending the country programme to cover all 28 districts and enhancing its institutional capacity would help to implement the 2030 Agenda.

70. The representative of Rwanda expressed appreciation for the UNICEF country programme as a guiding framework that responded to the five key priorities under the second pillar of the Rwanda National Strategy for Transformation, 2017–2024. The programme formed an integral part of the overall "One United Nations" coordinated presence in Rwanda. The programme was ambitious in comparison with the allocated budget and Rwanda welcomed UNICEF efforts to leverage domestic and international resources and partnership for children. It encouraged UNICEF to support the Government's efforts to mobilize public and private funding through blended finance approaches.

71. The Executive Board adopted decision 2018/5 (see annex).

(b) Extensions of ongoing country programmes

72. The President stated that, in accordance with Executive Board decision 2009/11, the Executive Board had been informed of the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Congo, Cuba, Mexico and Sierra Leone, as approved by the Executive Director. The Board had also been requested to approve the proposed one-year extension of the country programme for the Syrian Arab Republic, following a previous one-year extension. Those proposals were presented in document E/ICEF/2018/P/L.7.

73. The Executive Board took note of the one-year extensions of the country programmes for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Congo, Cuba, Mexico and Sierra Leone, as approved by the Executive Director and reflected in decision 2018/6 (see annex).

74. The Executive Board approved the one-year extension of the country programme for the Syrian Arab Republic, as reflected in decision 2018/6 (see annex).

F. Evaluation reports and management responses

75. The President introduced the annual report for 2017 on the evaluation function in UNICEF (E/ICEF/2018/15) and the related management response (UNICEF/2018/EB/5) and the evaluation of UNICEF strategies and programmes to reduce stunting in children under 5 years of age (E/ICEF/2018/16 (executive summary) and the related management response (E/ICEF/2018/17).

76. The Director of the Evaluation Office presented the two reports, following which the Deputy Executive Director (Management) provided the management responses.

Annual report for 2017 on the evaluation function in UNICEF, and management response

77. In the sole intervention of the Executive Board on the report, a group of delegations recognized that the report's scope included a summary of various reviews and reports in addition to the annual assessment of performance, and stressed that an independent evaluation function was essential to UNICEF. They appreciated the organization's willingness to implement the recommendations of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the United National Evaluation Group (UNEG) peer review, its focus on increasing the quality of evaluations and the inclusion of a management response.

78. On evaluation function performance, the group welcomed the efforts of UNICEF to consider the recommendations set out in Board decision 2017/9, in particular the improvement of geographical coverage and the incorporation of cross-cutting themes. However, they called on UNICEF to ensure that the issue of gender equality was considered in all evaluations and to increase the rate of evaluations having humanitarian action as a cross-cutting theme to bring it more in line with the spending of UNICEF in crisis settings. They requested that the organization provide the Board with concrete steps as to the ways in which it intended to reach those targets. The Director of the Evaluation Office agreed that an expanded approach to the inclusion of gender equality was important. While noting the independent assessment system already being used to provide feedback on gender equality to those conducting evaluations, he also reported that the Office was considering instituting a capacity-building programme to increase the skills of staff in the area of evaluation.

79. The group also requested the better alignment of the number of evaluations submitted per region with the respective direct programme expenses of each region to ensure adequate evaluation coverage in regions with high UNICEF spending.

80. On the thematic distribution of evaluations for the period 2018–2021 compared with the period 2014–2017, the group sought details on the decrease of sector-specific evaluations on education and child protection and requested that UNICEF takes steps to ensure the stable, balanced coverage of evaluations across sectors. They expected future reports to be structured around the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 and the revised evaluation policy. They looked forward to details on the ways in which UNICEF would execute the policy, particularly regarding evaluation planning, standards, implementation and evaluation capacity building.

81. On resource allocation, the group expressed ongoing concern that UNICEF had not met its target of allocating 1 per cent of total programme expenditure to evaluation. They highlighted that, at the annual session of 2017, the Board had expressed its concern and requested UNICEF to present a plan for reaching that target. While recognizing the establishment of the pooled fund in the revised evaluation policy was part of that plan and that the results framework of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 included the target, they emphasized the importance of ensuring that the target was met. The Deputy Executive Director noted that the further professionalization of the evaluation function within UNICEF would help to bring understanding to UNICEF staff of the purpose of evaluations as well as how to carry them out, both of which would help to promote the undertaking of evaluations. Such measures were part of the allocation of more resources to evaluation, as was the establishment of the pooled fund as a catalytic mechanism.

82. The group welcomed the active engagement of UNICEF in the independent system-wide evaluation and its participation in UNEG. They encouraged the Evaluation Office to continue its engagement with partners, including through joint

evaluations of the UNDAF and joint programmes. They reiterated the importance of conducting joint evaluations, including among UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women, around the common chapter of their strategic plans. They sought details on plans for joint country portfolio evaluat. and requested information on the status of the coordination agreement with UNEG. The Director of the Evaluation Office explained ongoing discussions by UNEG to strengthen UNDAF evaluations, and with United Nations entities with whom UNICEF has joint programmes to expand the coverage of joint programme evaluations.

83. The Executive Board adopted decision 2018/10 (see annex).

Evaluation of UNICEF strategies and programmes to reduce stunting in children under 5 years of age, and management response

84. One delegation expressed appreciation for the ongoing focus of UNICEF on nutrition-specific, nutrition-sensitive and cross-sectoral approaches to reducing the burden of malnutrition on women, adolescents and children. In particular, the delegation welcomed efforts to increase knowledge generation on the determinants of stunting and interventions for stunting reduction, and stressed the importance of looking at stunting within a life-cycle approach, as part of the new nutrition strategy.

85. The delegation appreciated that the evaluation addressed gender inequality, but felt that coverage of the topic could be strengthened in future reports. It welcomed the commitment to develop guidelines and manuals to improve the integration of human rights and gender equality perspectives in evaluations, but stressed that the guidelines should also assess the impact on programming of undertaking a comprehensive gender-based analysis. The organization's overall approach to stunting prevention and reduction would be strengthened by a more rigorous approach to analysing the gender determinants of malnutrition and stunting. Such rigorous analysis would be essential for transformative nutrition programming.

86. The delegation stressed the importance of UNICEF leadership within efforts to reduce stunting at the national and international levels, and encouraged it to expand its engagement with other United Nations organizations, such as UNFPA and UN-Women. There was also a call for the Fund to work more closely with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) on the issue.

87. One delegation requested details on UNICEF plans to engage Member States in efforts to reduce stunting and to address the lack of education on nutrition-sensitive approaches. The Director, Programme Division, responded that technical staff from Member States would be included in the external reference group. He confirmed that programming on nutrition-sensitive education would be examined in the strategy, along with such issues as the links between nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene and other sectors.

88. The Executive Board adopted decision 2018/10 (see annex).

G. Revised evaluation policy of UNICEF

89. The President introduced the revised evaluation policy of UNICEF (E/ICEF/2018/14).

90. Following introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director (Management), the Director of the Evaluation Office presented the report.

91. A group of delegations welcomed the revised evaluation policy and its improvements, and expressed appreciation for the frank discussions with Board

members throughout the revision process. The group addressed four main points: resource allocation targets; the independence of the Evaluation Office; national evaluation capacity development; and system-wide evaluation and partnerships.

92. On the resource allocation targets, the group highlighted that the new evaluation policy had set a clear target of 1 per cent of overall programme expenditure to evaluation function. They strongly supported that target as crucial for strengthening the UNICEF evaluation function and protecting it in times of resource fluctuation. The Board would closely monitor that UNICEF reached that target and would revisit the issue at the annual session of 2019.

93. The group valued the independence of the Evaluation Office, and stated that the selection of its Director should happen in consultation with the Executive Director. They supported the direct reporting of the Director of the Evaluation Office to the Executive Director and to the Executive Board. The policy provided the key instrument for the office to operate in full discretion and control over allocated resources.

94. The group of delegations underscored that developing the evaluation capacity of Governments and local partners was paramount to building the national ownership and leadership of development processes. They welcomed the UNICEF commitment to the policy and proposed actions, and called for a common approach with other United Nations organizations and development banks to avoid duplication. They requested that UNICEF present details on its experiences in that regard at the upcoming Board sessions.

95. The group welcomed the inclusion in the revised policy of evaluation functions in the United Nations development system and the UNICEF participation in system-wide evaluations, including for the common chapter of the strategic plans. They stressed that independent system-wide evaluations were of utmost importance for measuring the common objectives laid out in the 2030 Agenda, which demanded enhanced coordination among organizations' evaluation functions. UNICEF played a unique role in system-wide evaluations by leading on the child-related Goals at the country level.

96. The delegations encouraged UNICEF to ensure the sound implementation of evaluation policy principles throughout its work. They called for better evaluation coverage of such cross-cutting issues as gender equality and humanitarian action and strengthened decentralized evaluations to support learning and accountability. They looked forward to the independent review of the policy in 2022.

97. Two delegations asked about plans to enhance evaluation capacity at the local level. The Director of the Evaluation Office responded that the new policy laid the foundation for capacity-building work to grow, especially through collaboration with partners.

98. The Executive Board adopted decision 2018/10 (see annex).

H. Report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF for 2017

99. The Principal Adviser, Ethics, presented the report of the Ethics Office for 2017 (E/ICEF/2018/13).

100. A group of delegations highlighted the important contribution of the Ethics Office to upholding the highest standards of ethics, integrity and accountability within UNICEF. Its training and outreach to staff raised awareness of UNICEF standards and values and increased coverage. The growing number of requests was the result of the Office's effective initiatives. They acknowledged its growing workload and requested

UNICEF to allocate adequate resources so it could fulfil its function and provide advice and support to staff and non-staff personnel. They requested that UNICEF and the Office produce a joint assessment of the level of resources provided to the Office.

101. The group encouraged the Ethics Office, in its annual report, to draw conclusions and make recommendations to UNICEF and the Executive Board, and asked UNICEF to provide a separate management response to the annual report of the Ethics Office, starting in 2019. They renewed their 2017 request for management to involve the Office in matters of standard-setting and policy support, which would clearly define roles, responsibilities and processes for the involvement of the Office. They requested that the policy be presented in the annual report of the Ethics Office in 2019.

102. The group welcomed the actions taken to address sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, including the creation of an interim post focused on sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual harassment and child safeguarding. They welcomed the support of the Ethics Office for the operationalization of the child safeguarding policy and requested that it present information on progress, challenges and recommendations in its annual report in 2019. The Office had a role to play in establishing responsibilities and processes within UNICEF to prevent and fight abuse, exploitation, harassment and other misconduct. They looked forward to the results of the Independent Task Force on workplace gender discrimination and harassment, and asked that the Task Force include in its report analysis and the elaboration of roles and responsibiiities within UNICEF for the prevention and tackling of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. The analysis should include the assignment of responsibilities for implementing actions on sexual misconduct and child safeguarding, many of which were outlined in the Office of Internal Audit and Investigation's 2017 annual report. They called on the Ethics Office to continue its proactive approach and to take responsibility for protection against sexual exploitation and abuse within UNICEF according to its mandate. They stressed the importance of creating conditions that fostered a speak-up culture, and welcomed the efforts of UNICEF and the Ethics Office to increase trust among staff.

I. Office of Internal Audit and Investigations 2017 annual report to the Executive Board, and management response

UNICEF Audit Advisory Committee 2017 annual report

103. The President introduced the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations 2017 annual report to the Executive Board (E/ICEF/2018/AB/L.2 and Corr.1) and the related management response (E/ICEF/2018/AB/L.3). Also before the Board, for its information, was the UNICEF Audit Advisory Committee 2017 annual report.

104. The Director, Office of Internal Audit and Investigations, presented the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations 2017 annual report to the Executive Board, which the Deputy Executive Director (Management) followed with the presentation of the management response. The Vice-Chair of the UNICEF Audit Advisory Committee provided comments from the Committee's perspective.

105. A group of delegations welcomed the Office's analysis of the effectiveness of the organization's governance, risk management and control frameworks as "generally satisfactory". They welcomed management's commitment to address areas in need of strengthening, including risk management, the management of implementing partners and fraud risk management and safeguarding. They appreciated the follow-up actions to address Board concerns about continuous risk areas identified in the annual report of the Office for 2016, and welcomed the detailed

status given in the management response. They commended UNICEF for its efforts to reduce the number of recommendations outstanding for more than 18 months, and asked that it give priority to the remaining recommendations, including those dating to 2013 and 2015.

106. The group acknowledged that the Office's heightened focus on risk-prone areas and offices in response to complex humanitarian situations explained its 2017 ratings, and requested analysis on the reasons for the absence of "adverse" internal audit reports in 2017, the decrease in the overall number of reports rated "satisfactory" and the increase in reports rated "strongly qualified".

107. They encouraged the Office to include reporting against a full set of key performance indicators in its annual report for 2018, and welcomed its plans to undertake an external quality assessment of the audit function. They encouraged the Office to include a summary of findings of the assessment and progress in implementing its recommendations in the 2018 report. The Director, Office of Internal Audit and Investigations, confirmed that the Office was working internally on developing such indicators, and that the Office leadership would look forward to presenting the results of the external quality-assurance exercise to the Executive Board next year.

108. The group welcomed the implementation of the new anti-fraud strategy and the initiatives to strengthen the control of third parties to minimize losses. They expressed continued concern with the low level of reported recoveries, and urged UNICEF to focus on strengthening recovery processes and reporting to the Board on the recovery of losses, in particular the degree to which losses sustained in one year were recovered in subsequent years. The Deputy Director, Division of Financial and Administrative Management, noted that the new anti-fraud strategy signalled management's greater focus on the issue. The Director and the Deputy Director both suggested that reports of fraud and misconduct might rise in the short term, because of increased awareness throughout the organization, and not necessarily because of an increase in cases.

109. The group requested the inclusion in the 2018 report of an analysis of the channels through which allegations of fraud and misconduct were detected or reported. The Director noted that management was putting great effort into improving reporting channels and encouraging a speak-up culture. To assess whether such efforts had been effective, the Office planned to provide an update later in the year on any changes detected in the patterns of allegations raised.

110. The group also urged UNICEF to ensure that the harmonized approach to cash transfers was understood and implemented in a qualitative manner.

111. The group expressed appreciation for the Executive Director's clear stance on sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment and the broad analysis in the management response of actions taken. They welcomed the Office's plans for 2018 to embed and mainstream a coherent, effective approach to child protection and safeguarding throughout UNICEF, and requested that, in its assessment and assurance, the Office make specific recommendations to improve the UNICEF approach and policies on sexual exploitation and abuse, including by measuring progress against key performance indicators. They asked UNICEF to distinguish between sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment in developing programmes, policies and reports, and sought more in-depth analysis of both in future annual audit reports.

112. The Executive Board adopted decision 2018/12 (see annex).

J. Report of the field visit to the Dominican Republic and Haiti by members of the Executive Board, 14–24 March 2018

113. The report of the field visit to the Dominican Republic and Haiti (UNICEF/2018/EB/6) was introduced by the Director, Office of Maternal and Child Health and Nutrition, Bureau for Global Health, United States Agency for International Development.

114. The delegation had gained first-hand understanding of UNICEF work at the country level, and saw examples of cooperation with the host Governments and other partners, including the country teams. The visit enabled delegations to understand the issues regarding children and women and the challenges they faced in the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

115. The delegation commended the UNICEF country teams in both countries for their achievements in complex contexts, their close working relationships with the host Governments and their ability to balance both the need to work through NGOs and the goal of strengthening the host Government's capacity by channelling funds through government structures.

116. They were pleased with the cooperation between UNICEF and government institutions in developing norms and standards in the formulation of policies affecting children, as well the organization's focus on its comparative advantage in providing strategic policy advice for national programmes. They appreciated the clear focus on the most vulnerable population groups and the most disadvantaged geographical areas.

117. The delegation noted the importance of UNICEF efforts to strengthen the disaggregation of data to reveal social disparities as a basis for advocacy and programme planning. They welcomed the organization's efforts to influence policies, legislation and public spending towards the most disadvantaged. The delegation noted the importance of maintaining a minimum level of core programme resources to sustain the UNICEF capacity to provide high-level technical advice and to influence policies.

118. UNICEF engagement with partners, civil society, communities, and faith-based organizations in the private sector was a good example of the added value and the multiplier effect it could have as a catalyst to bring partners together. The delegation noted the cooperation within the country teams of the various United Nations entities reflected in the large number of joint programmes. The delegation commended UNICEF for partnerships established at all levels with ministries and local authorities to achieve results through evidenced-based advocacy and action. It was pleased to observe how the country programmes worked on issues that transcended borders.

119. The representative of the Dominican Republic underscored the importance of the work of UNICEF in her country to strengthen national capacities to achieve the Goals. She drew attention the programmes developed for the well-being of children and adolescents in education, health care, services to reduce mother and child mortality, sexual exploitation and issues related to child pornography. She highlighted the success of a project on technology and crime that had had major success in eliminating pornography distribution centres. Also key was the launching of a study on social investment as part of efforts to provide quantitative information, monitor investment levels and measure transparency, fairness and efficiency. The new country programme would make a major contribution to enhancing public policy in promoting and protecting the rights of children and adolescents, including through budget planning and data collection.

120. The Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda highlighted that UNICEF had played a crucial role in the response to Hurricane Irma in his nation, and was working with the national authorities to prepare for the next hurricane. They were encouraged by the extensive consultations between UNICEF and the Government in shaping a response to the disaster while at the same time working to make sure no one was left behind at both the national and subregional levels. He underscored the importance of multi-country offices in addressing the needs of small island developing States, which the reinvigoration of the resident coordinator system under resolution 72/279 should address.

121. The representative of Brazil underlined the special needs, challenges and vulnerabilities of the small island developing States. She stressed that UNICEF had a special role to play in bringing out the ethical dimensions of the ways in which field visit findings were portrayed in the media.

122. The representative of Ghana noted the grave difficulties that Haiti is facing, particularly following Hurricane Matthew, and commended UNICEF for its work in the country.

123. The representative of the United States stressed the importance of having a field visit delegation composed of members with diverse skills and specializations who could shed light on different development challenges during the visits.

K. Address by the Chairperson of the UNICEF Global Staff Association

124. In her address to the Executive Board, the Chairperson of the Global Staff Association highlighted the efforts of UNICEF to address issues raised at the annual session of 2017 and drew attention to ongoing challenges.

125. In response to the 2017 Global Staff Survey, the Global Management Team had identified five priorities that required corporate intervention and had tasked five members to lead in addressing: (a) the gender gap; (b) career development; (c) office efficiency; (d) managerial accountability; and (e) enhancement of the speak-up culture.

126. She highlighted that, in an effort to enhance speak-up culture, UNICEF had launched the Voice Programme, which was aimed at improving the ability of staff to interact freely with each other without hierarchical boundaries and to discuss performance issues and sensitive subjects.

127. The Gender Working Group found that UNICEF was similar to other employers in terms of gender equality in the workplace. It also learned that, while UNICEF was close to gender parity, some sectors remained less gender-balanced than others. Gender equality in the workplace demanded a broader, more inclusive shift in organizational culture to promote equality, reject stereotypes and discrimination and counter privilege. The Task Force had proposed developing a mentorship programme for both women and men, setting up a family-friendly rotation policy and promoting spousal employment.

128. The career and development working group supported the launch of a career development portfolio that included career management workshops, webinars, one-on-one coaching, online chats, a web portal with resources and training for global human resources staff to support staff. A comprehensive career conversation tool kit was under development.

129. The working group on office efficiency and effectiveness had identified several areas to work on: the simplification and streamlining of business processes, the

development of a playbook to support offices to monitor and assist the improvement initiatives and a reduction in the number of change initiatives.

130. The working group on managerial accountability had begun working and would make recommendations later in 2018.

131. On sexual harassment and abuse of authority, the Chairperson reported that the Executive Director had taken swift action to underscore the UNICEF commitment to a zero-tolerance policy. Training on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment and abuse of authority was mandatory for all staff members and consultants. UNICEF had strengthened reporting and response mechanisms and taken disciplinary action. Management had followed through on its promise to establish an independent task force to review its policies and practices and make recommendations.

132. She highlighted that human resources reforms in 2016 and 2017 had resulted in increased, conscious efforts to engage staff associations on revisions to policies affecting staff. Positive changes included the implementation of continued appointments, the issuance of longer fixed contracts and the adoption of the title "associate" to replace "assistant". The contractual changes had created job security and raised staff morale.

133. On staff safety and security, the Executive Director had visited a number of emergency duty stations and witnessed the hardships of staff, especially national staff with less support due to limitations in benefits. UNICEF was an active member of the Task Force on Duty of Care established by the High-level Committee on Management, and had committed to implementing the duty-of-care recommendations in coordination with other United Nations organizations.

134. She noted that the recommendations of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) to reduce entitlements and benefits of international professional staff, approved by the General Assembly in 2015, had affected staff morale and raised concerns about attracting and retaining staff. ICSC had also embarked on a review of the compensation package for national staff, for whom the ICSC local salary methodology had had negative consequences. The Global Staff Association had joined other United Nations staff unions and associations in demanding ICSC reforms to its salary methodologies for national and international staff.

135. Turning to United Nations reform, the Chairperson highlighted that the goal to enhance coherence and efficiency raised concerns among staff about potential job losses. The Global Staff Association would engage with management to establish mitigation measures to protect staff from the impact of reforms, and to ensure that decisions affecting staff were fair and transparent.

L. Other matters

Provisional list of agenda items for the second regular session of 2018

136. The provisional list of agenda items for the second regular session of 2018 was presented by the Secretary of the Executive Board.

M. Adoption of draft decisions

137. The Executive Board adopted decisions 2018/5, 2018/6, 2018/7, 2018/8, 2018/9, 2018/10, 2018/11 and 2018/12 (see annex).

N. UNICEF Staff Team Awards and closing statements by the Executive Director of UNICEF and the President of the Executive Board

138. The Executive Director announced the winners of the 2018 UNICEF Staff Team Awards, which recognized the efforts of UNICEF staff around the world:

(a) The country office in Yemen had shown remarkable achievement in overcoming the seemingly insurmountable challenges to reach mothers, children and young people desperate for aid and support in an environment defined by internal conflict, political divide, security concerns and threats. In the face of those challenges, staff members were resilient and committed, and forged innovative, collaborative partnerships to support the organization's mission and publicize the growing needs in Yemen;

(b) The Akure field office in Nigeria had displayed outstanding cooperation and coordination in handling an unprecedented and sensitive security situation, in which two UNICEF staff members were ambushed while on official travel. Tragically, one of the colleagues perished in the incident, and the other was held hostage for four days. The office made extraordinary efforts, in collaboration with local authorities and other partners, secured the perished colleague's remains and enabled the safe return of the second colleague;

(c) The Afghanistan and Pakistan country offices and their polio teams had worked relentlessly to eradicate polio in the face of a global resurgence. The teams mobilized community members to work on the front lines of the polio eradication effort, including many women, ensuring that the vaccination programme reached children in remote areas where conditions, terrain and security challenges were difficult to manage;

(d) The UNICEF Division of Financial and Administrative Management: was recognized for its technical innovation, EZ-HACT (harmonized approach to cash transfers), which had dramatically changed the way in which country offices operated. Developed in conjunction with colleagues in information and communications technology and the Field Results Group, EZ-HACT simplified and streamlined the processing, management and reporting of cash transfers, eliminating several manual steps and reducing the processing time of cash transfers, and making enhanced reporting possible.

139. In closing, the Executive Director reiterated the commitment of UNICEF to work closely with the Board in delivering on the Strategic Plan, improving the working methods of the Board and proactively driving forward United Nations reform, in close cooperation with United Nations development system organizations, as embodied in resolution 72/279.

140. The President underscored the Board's achievements during the session at an opportune moment within the United Nations, with the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 72/279 and its bold plan to reposition the United Nations development system. The Executive Boards of the funds, programmes and specialized agencies were committed to driving the reform forward. He highlighted the main discussions of the UNICEF Board meeting, including the new evaluation policy, which he fully endorsed as setting the stage for a culture that used evaluation for better performance, continuous improvement and strengthened accountability in service to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. He also noted the report of the field visit to the Dominican Republic and Haiti, which had shown the substantive achievement of UNICEF in those two complex countries, and had once again highlighted the importance of maintaining a sufficient level of core resources, so that UNICEF could

continue to implement effective and sustainable programmes. He expressed appreciation for the presentation by the secretariat of its efforts to strengthen protections against sexual exploitation and abuse and against workplace sexual harassment, and he noted the importance of accountability and transparency and the invaluable role played by UNICEF staff across the globe for children.

Annex

Decisions adopted by the Executive Board at its annual session of 2018

2018/5
Country programme documents

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* that the country programme documents, including aggregate indicative budgets, for Kenya, Malawi and Rwanda (E/ICEF/2018/P/L.4–E/ICEF/2018/P/L.6) were made available to Member States for their comments and input from 16 March to 5 April 2018, in accordance with Executive Board decision 2014/1 on modifications to procedures for consideration and approval of country programme documentation;

2. *Approves* on a no-objection basis, and in accordance with decision 2014/1, the country programme documents, including aggregate indicative budgets, for Kenya, Malawi and Rwanda (E/ICEF/2018/P/L.4–E/ICEF/2018/P/L.6).

Annual session
12 June 2018

2018/6
Extensions of ongoing country programmes

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the one-year extensions of the country programmes for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Congo, Cuba, Mexico and Sierra Leone, which were approved by the Executive Director and are presented in table 1 of document E/ICEF/2018/P/L.7;

2. *Approves* the one-year extension of the country programme for the Syrian Arab Republic, following a previous one-year extension, as presented in table 2 of document E/ICEF/2018/P/L.7.

Annual session
11 June 2018

2018/7
Annual report for 2017 of the Executive Director of UNICEF

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the annual report for 2017 of the Executive Director of UNICEF (E/ICEF/2018/9), including the report on the implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system and achievements against the Integrated Results and Resources Framework of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014–2017 (E/ICEF/2018/9/Add.1), the annex on UNICEF implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, 2017 and the data companion and scorecard;

2. *Also takes note* of the UNICEF report on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit (E/ICEF/2018/11);

3. *Decides* to transmit the above-mentioned reports to the Economic and Social Council, along with a summary of the comments and guidance of the Executive Board;

4. *Recognizes* the inter-agency efforts being made to advance the common chapter and requests UNICEF to continue consultations with the United Nations funds and programmes on the harmonized format for common chapter reporting;

5. *Welcomes* the mentioning of the common chapter in the annual report and asks UNICEF to report on the status of the implementation of the common chapter, starting with the annual report for 2018 of the Executive Director, and to present the findings at the joint meeting of the Executive Boards and at the annual session;

6. *Requests* UNICEF to continue to engage with the Secretary-General, other United Nations development system entities and Member States with a view to supporting the full implementation of General Assembly resolutions 71/243 and 72/279, including its contribution to a smooth transition and business continuity of the resident coordinator system;

7. *Also requests* UNICEF, as a United Nations development system entity, to engage closely with the Secretary-General and Member States to support the preparation of a well-thought-out implementation plan for the inception of the reinvigorated resident coordinator system, including on the operationalization of its funding arrangements, to be presented to the General Assembly;

8. *Further requests* UNICEF to present a preliminary analysis of the financial and other implications of resolution 72/279 for UNICEF to the Executive Board at its second regular session in 2018;

9. *Requests* UNICEF, in accordance with resolution 72/279, to provide its contribution to the adequate, predictable and sustainable funding of the resident coordinator system, in line with the forthcoming implementation plan for the inception of the reinvigorated resident coordinator system to be presented to the General Assembly, on an annual basis starting 1 January 2019;

10. *Recalls* Executive Board decision 2017/14 to improve future structured dialogues on financing and to present a proposal to the Executive Board no later than the second regular session of 2018 on how it plans to use the structured dialogue on financing as a tool to improve the quality and transparency of funding and to better match resources to the outcomes of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, and encourages UNICEF to provide in advance an overview of funding gaps in relation to the implementation of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, taking into account both regular and other resources;

11. *Welcomes* the UNICEF Executive Director's commitment to implementing resolutions 71/243 and 72/279 and in this regard encourages the secretariat of the Executive Board of UNICEF to work together with the secretariats of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Office for Project Services, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the World Food Programme to produce a joint response to the joint meeting of the Executive Boards segment on working methods by no later than four weeks before the second regular session 2018, allowing for a consultation process among Member States ahead of that session of 2018;

12. *Encourages* the secretariat of the Executive Board of UNICEF to continue pursuing ways to improve the working methods of the Executive Board and to generate additional cost savings, including in the preparation of formal Executive Board documents in compliance with the rules on the official and working languages

of UNICEF, and decides to consider the number of yearly field visits of the Executive Board of UNICEF at the September Board session 2018.

Annual session
13 June 2018

2018/8
Update on UNICEF actions on strengthening protections (a) against sexual exploitation and abuse and (b) against workplace sexual harassment

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note with appreciation* of the Executive Director's zero tolerance of both sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, and appreciates the actions that UNICEF has taken so far to prevent and manage sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, implement further institutional and cultural changes and ensure a joined-up, system-wide, coherent approach;

2. *Also takes note with appreciation* of the independent evaluation that UNICEF is undertaking of its policies and processes on tackling sexual exploitation and abuse and the Independent Task Force on workplace gender discrimination and harassment, and requests UNICEF to present the evaluation and Task Force reports and associated management responses to the Executive Board;

3. *Requests* UNICEF management, as required under the Secretary-General's report on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, to present its annual certification to the Executive Board at each annual session, to cover sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment, as appropriate, complementing and strengthening its existing reporting, and to provide updates on progress made in that regard, including working with the office of the Victims' Rights Advocate for the United Nations, and further urges UNICEF to consider how to align reporting formats and content with other agencies, where appropriate;

4. *Encourages* the Bureau of the Executive Board of UNICEF to consider the possibility of discussing the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse of beneficiaries and sexual harassment in the workplace at the joint meeting of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Office for Project Services, UNICEF, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the World Food Programme in order to increase the efficiency of the Boards and avoid duplication.

Annual session
14 June 2018

2018/9
Annual report on UNICEF humanitarian action

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the annual report on UNICEF humanitarian action (E/ICEF/2018/10);

2. *Welcomes* the increase in dialogue between the UNICEF secretariat and the Executive Board on the critical work of UNICEF in humanitarian action,

including through the delivery of the first annual report on UNICEF humanitarian action;

3. *Requests* that future annual reports on UNICEF humanitarian action reflect the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, where humanitarian action is mainstreamed in each Goal Area and is a cross-cutting theme, and the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, and also requests UNICEF to reflect progress achieved in all geographic regions in a more inclusive manner in subsequent reports.

Annual session
12 June 2018

2018/10
Evaluation reports and management responses and revised evaluation policy of UNICEF

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the annual report for 2017 on the evaluation function in UNICEF (E/ICEF/2018/15);

2. *Welcomes* the good progress on evaluation of UNICEF activities, but notes with concern that spending on evaluation as a percentage of total programme expenditure decreased in 2017 and has consistently failed over recent years to reach the target of 1 per cent of programme expenditure as set out in the UNICEF evaluation policy and emphasized in previous Executive Board decisions, and therefore requests UNICEF to reach the target by the end of 2019;

3. *Notes* that the thematic distribution of evaluations in the period 2014–2016 shows a sharp drop in the number of sector-specific evaluations for education and child protection, and calls on UNICEF to ensure a stable delivery rate;

4. *Welcomes* the improvement in the evaluation coverage of cross-cutting themes, and requests UNICEF to include gender equality as a cross-cutting theme in all evaluations and to increase the coverage rate of humanitarian action to one that better reflects the current overall spending of UNICEF in contexts of conflicts and crises;

5. *Takes note* of the reported number of evaluations submitted per region, and requests UNICEF, for especially those regions with the largest programme expenses, to significantly increase evaluation coverage;

6. *Requests* that future annual reports be structured around the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 (policy areas and spending) and the revised evaluation policy of UNICEF;

7. *Recalls* its decision 2018/2, and takes note of the importance of joint evaluations with other entities, including joint evaluation of the common chapter of the strategic plans of the funds and programmes, and calls on the Evaluation Office and UNICEF to brief the Executive Board at its second regular session of 2018 on planning for this joint evaluation as part of its contribution to broader collaboration on joint evaluations of system-wide activities and to the function of system-wide independent evaluation measures;

8. *Takes note* of the evaluation of UNICEF strategies and programmes to reduce stunting in children under 5 years of age and its executive summary (E/ICEF/2018/16), looks forward to the implementation of the actions described in the management response, and requests an update on the implementation of the recommendations of the evaluation at the annual session of the Executive Board in 2019;

9. *Welcomes* the final proposal for the revised evaluation policy of UNICEF (E/ICEF/2018/14);

10. *Also welcomes* the open and constructive collaboration with Member States in the development of the revised evaluation policy;

11. *Requests* UNICEF to fully implement consistently the revised evaluation policy across all areas of the organization, including different policy areas at headquarters and at the field level, including capacity-building at the country and programme levels;

12. *Endorses* the revised evaluation policy.

Annual session
13 June 2018

2018/11
Report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF for 2017

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF for 2017 (E/ICEF/2018/13);

2. *Appreciates* the successful outreach activities of the Ethics Office of UNICEF, which led to an enormous increase in the number of requests in 2017, and welcomes the results of the innovative Ethics Dialogue Facilitator Model, raising awareness of ethics and integrity organization-wide through facilitators and with limited resources;

3. *Requests* the Ethics Office to engage proactively in the implementation and coordination of actions against sexual exploitation and abuse of beneficiaries and sexual harassment in the workplace, in accordance with its mandate, and also requests the Ethics Office to provide dedicated and more-detailed reporting on its activities against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment in its future reports;

4. *Recalls* that the Ethics Office views the operationalization of the UNICEF Child Safeguarding Policy as unfinished business, and in this regard requests the Ethics Office to provide an assessment in its 2019 annual report on progress, challenges and recommendations for improvements;

5. *Also recalls* that the Ethics Office views that there is an absence of an established policy of when, how and in what format it should be consulted on matters of ethics standard-setting and policy support, and in this regard requests the Ethics Office and management to formalize this policy, to be set out in the 2019 annual report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF;

6. *Requests* UNICEF to conduct an assessment of the level of resources provided to the Ethics Office, with a view to ensuring that the Office has the necessary resources to fulfil its mandate;

7. *Also requests* UNICEF to provide a separate management response to the key findings and recommendations of the annual report of the Ethics Office, and to submit this report to the Executive Board, along with the annual report of the Ethics Office, starting with the annual session of 2019;

8. *Further requests* UNICEF to share a summary of the results and recommendations of the Global Staff Survey 2017 with the Executive Board, and calls

upon UNICEF to take appropriate and effective steps to further improve the speak-up culture within the organization.

Annual session
13 June 2018

2018/12
Office of Internal Audit and Investigations 2017 annual report to the Executive Board

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the UNICEF Office of Internal Audit and Investigations 2017 annual report to the Executive Board (E/ICEF/2018/AB/L.2), including the overall assurance opinion of the adequacy and effectiveness of the organization's framework of governance, risk management and control, and encourages the Office to continue to develop the accompanying rationale to aid the Board's understanding of the functioning of key processes;

2. *Welcomes* the supporting analysis for the assurance opinion of the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations, and also welcomes the progress made to develop and implement the Office's strategic road map, and requests the Office to include reporting against further key performance indicators related to their work in future annual reports, starting with the report to be presented at the annual session of the Executive Board in 2019;

3. *Requests* the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations to provide more-detailed analysis of cases of sexual exploitation and abuse of beneficiaries and sexual harassment in the workplace in accordance with its mandate, including allegations, investigations and actions taken, in its 2018 annual report to the Executive Board;

4. *Recalls* that the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations, in its annual report, confirms that it will conduct work in 2018 to provide assurance that a coherent and effective approach to child protection and safeguarding is successfully embedded in and mainstreamed across UNICEF, and in this regard, requests that (a) the Office, in its assessment and assurance, make specific recommendations for improvements in the approach and policies of UNICEF, as appropriate; and (b) the Office and management develop a system for monitoring progress against key performance indicators, to be reported on in future annual reports of the Office;

5. *Welcomes* the Office's increased focus on key risk areas, the increasing number of internal audits of offices operating in complex humanitarian situations and the efforts to reduce the turnover time of reports to provide timely information to stakeholders;

6. *Takes note* of the Office's plans to undertake an external quality assessment of its audit and investigation teams, and asks the Office to include a summary of its findings and details of progress in implementing its recommendations in its next annual report;

7. *Also takes note* of the fact that no internal audit reports were rated adverse, but also of the decrease in reports rated satisfactory and the increase in reports rated strongly qualified, and encourages UNICEF to continue to develop quality;

8. *Further takes note* of the actions reported in response to the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations 2016 annual report and Executive Board decision 2017/10, and requests an update on the implementation of actions in response to the

Office's 2017 annual report at the annual session of the UNICEF Executive Board in 2019;

9. *Takes note* of the decreased implementation rate of audit recommendations in 2017 compared with 2016, and encourages UNICEF management to implement outstanding audit recommendations and to ensure appropriate follow-up of key improvement areas, such as risk management, the management of implementing partners, fraud risk management and safeguarding, and to update the Executive Board at its annual session in June 2019;

10. *Welcomes* the efforts to minimize the number of actions outstanding for more than 18 months;

11. *Takes note* of the recommendations made to management by the Audit Advisory Committee, and encourages management to consider all recommendations by the Committee;

12. *Welcomes* the implementation of an anti-fraud strategy, and requests the Office to include in future annual reports an analysis of the channels by which allegations of fraud and other misconduct are detected or reported to the Office;

13. *Notes with concern* the consistently low level of recovery of defrauded funds, in particular with regard to third parties, and reiterates its call for management to do all that it can to ensure the timely recovery of any potential loss in investigated cases, and requests UNICEF management to provide, in future management responses, details, broken down by calendar year, of aggregate losses over prior years and cumulative recoveries to date against each year's losses;

14. *Notes with appreciation* that the Office reports that it was allocated appropriate and sufficient resources in 2017, and requests UNICEF to continue to allocate sufficient resources for the Office to ensure a satisfactory number of internal audits and investigations each year;

15. *Requests* UNICEF to continue to focus efforts on improving investigation timelines, noting the increasing number of cases pending for investigation from year to year.

Annual session
13 June 2018